

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 06781 01 OF 03 161853Z
ACTION SS-25

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R 161545Z MAY 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7454
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 MOSCOW 6781

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR EFIS UR JA
SUBJECT: SOVIET-JAPANESE RELATIONS: HOW DEEP THE RIFT?

REF: (A) TOKYO 6530 (NOTAL), (B) TOKYO 5941 (NOTAL), (C)
MOSCOW 5943 (NOTAL), (D) MOSCOW 5863 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE STRAIN CAUSED BY THE CURRENT FISHING TOLKS
HAS BROUGHT SOVIET-JAPANESE RELATIONS TO THEIR LOWEST POINT
IN MANY YEARS.

BUT RELATIONS HAVE BEEN STRAINED BEFORE -- INDEED,
IN RECENT YEARS THIS HAS BEEN MORE THE NORM THAN THE
EXCEPTION, ON THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE THE SOVIET POSITION
IS UMPALATBLE TO THE JAPANESE, BUT IT IS BOTH PRE-
DICTABLE AND CONSISTENT. SOVIET BEHAVIOR IN OUR VIEW
IS MOTIVATED BY THREE FACTORS:THE BELIEF THAT THEIR
POSITION IS JUSTIFIED, THE CONVICTION THAT TOUGH TALK
WORKS WITH THE JAPANESE, AND THE WILLINGNESS TO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 06781 01 OF 03 161853Z

ACCEPT COOL POLITICAL RELATIONS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE
ALSO FACTORS LIMITING THE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS:
BOTH SIDES ARE MINDFUL OF THE DANGERS OF OPEN CON-
FRONTATION, THE SOVIETS CLEARLY DO NOT WISH TO PUCH
JAPAN INTO AN ANTI-SOVIET ALLIANCE WITH CHINA, AND
BOTH SIDES SEEK TO MAINTAIN THEIR FLOURISHING ECONOMIC
RELATIONSHIP. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY TOKYO (REF B)

THAT US RELATIONS WITH JAPAN ARE OF SUCH IMPORTANCE THAT WE SHOULD OFFER SYMPATHY TO JAPAN IN THIS DIFFICULT SITUATION. BUT WE RECOMMEND AGAINST TAKING A POSITION WHICH COULD BE MISINTERPRETED AS DISCOURAGING A SOLUTION.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE FISHERIES ISSUE: THE SOVIET ANNOUNCEMENT OF A 200-MILE FISHING ZONE LAST DECEMBER (TWO WEEKS AFTER CONCLUDING A GIFA WITH THE US) RAISED JAPANESE ANXIETIES ABOUT CONTINUED ACCESS TO THOSE WATERS FOR JAPANESE FISHERMEN. THE FOLLOW-UP SOVIET ANNOUNCEMENT IN FEBRUARY, SPELLING OUT THE AREAS OF JURISDICTION OF THIS ZONE, PRODUCED AN OUTCRY FROM JAPAN, SINCE IT SPECIFIED THAT "IN THE REGION OF THE SOUTHERN GROUP OF THE KURILE ISLANDS" THE ZONE WOULD EXTEND TO THE "LINE EXACTLY BETWEEN THESE ISLANDS AND THE TERRITORY OF JAPAN." THE BILATERAL FISHERIES TALKS, BETWEEN DELEGATIONS HEADED BY SOVIET FISHERIES MINISTER ISHKOV AND JAPANESE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES MINISTER SUZUKI, BEGAN IN LATE FEBRUARY AND HAVE CONTINUED INTERMITTENTLY WITHOUT MEASURABLE PROGRESS OVER THE INTERVENING TWO AND ONE-HALF MONTHS.

2. THERE ARE ESSENTIALLY THREE QUESTIONS TO BE RESOLVED IN THESE TALKS: (1) WHAT ARE THE TERRITORIAL LIMITS OF THE SOVIET ZONE; (2) HOW MANY FISH MAY THE JAPANESE CATCH IN THE SOVIET ZONE; AND (3) HOW MANY FISH MAY THE SOVIETS CATCH IN WATERS CONTROLLED BY JAPAN. OF THESE QUESTIONS THE FIRST IS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 06781 01 OF 03 161853Z

CLEARLY THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE JAPANESE, SINCE IT INVOLVES THE ISSUE OF THE "NORTHERN TERRITORIES"--THOSE ISLANDS NORTHEAST OF HOKKAIDO SEIZED BY THE USSR IN THE CLOSING DAYS OF WORLD WAR II. OKYO FINDS IT POLITICALLY DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT ANY TERMINOLOGY WHICH DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY ACKNOWLEDGES SOVIET SOVEREIGNTY OVER THOSE ISLANDS, AND IT THEREFORE SEEKS THE LEAST PRECISE VERBAL FORMULA ON THE QUESTION OF THE LIMITS OF THE SOVIET ZONE IN THAT AREA. MOSCOW, ON THE OTHER HAND, FINDS IT UNREASONABLE TO BE ASKED TO ACCEPT ANY REAL OR IMPLIED LIMIT OF ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER TERRITORY WHICH IT UNDENIABLY CONTROLS. THEREIN LIES THE IMPASSE. THE TERRITORIAL PROBLEM IS AN ISSUE IN WHICH THE BURDEN FOR SOLUTION LIES HEAVILY ON JAPAN AND THE SOVIET UNION CAN, AND WILL, FORCE THE JAPANESE TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN FINDING A COMPROMISE. THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN FORESEEN BY THE JAPANESE, SINCE IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, IN A FISHING AGREEMENT OR ANY OTHER OFFICIAL DOCUMENT,

WOULD CHOOSE NOT TO ASSERT JURISDICTION AND CONTROL
CONSISTENT WITH ITS OWN LEGAL POSITION AND ITS DE
FACTO CONTROL. THIS SOVIET POSITION, INTERPRETED AS
INTRANSIGENCE BY THE JAPANESE, IS WHOLLY CONSISTENT
WITH THE SOVIET STANCE ON THIS AND SIMILAR BORDER
QUESTIONS WITH ALL ITS NEIGHBORS. THE OPERATIONAL
QUESTION, AS WE SEE IT, IS HOW JAPAN CAN FIND SOME
FORMULA TO SUPPORT ITS LEGAL POSITION THAT
THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE IS NOT FORECLOSED BY ITS
(INEVITABLE) ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET CONTROL OVER THE
SOVIET ZONE, INCLUDING THE ISLANDS AND THE WATERS
AROUND THEM. THE JAPANESE HAVE REPORTEDLY CONSIDERED
A NUMBER OF FORMULAE, INCLUDING A UNILATERAL STATEMENT,
BUT THE SOVIETS ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE HELPFUL IN THIS
REGARD.

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 06781 02 OF 03 170533Z
ACTION SS-25

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CINCPAC

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 2 OF 3 MOSCOW 6781

EXDIS

CORRECTED COPY (TEXT--PARA THREE)

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3. ON THE QUESTION OF CONTINUED JAPANESE FISHING IN
SOVIET WATERS, JAPAN BEGAN FROM A WEAK POSITION SINCE
ITS OWN JURISDICTIONAL LAWS DIFFERED FROM THE SOVIET
REGULATIONS. WITH THE DIET'S PASSAGE OF THE 12- MILE
AND 220-MILE BILLS, HOWEVER, THIS ANOMALY HAS BEEN
REMOVED AND THE FISHING ISSUES SHOULD BE MORE EASILY
RESOLVABLE ON THE BASIS OF MUTUAL GIVE AND TAKE.

THE SOVIETS ARE CLEARLY RELUCTANT TO BE GENEROUS TO JAPANESE FISHERMEN BECAUSE THEIR OWN FISHING HAS BEEN SO SHARPLY CURTAILED IN OTHER AREAS, AND THE NORTH PACIFIC PROVIDES THE ONLY GOOD FISHING GROUNDS OVER WHICH THEY HAVE JURISDICTION. AS IT IS, THEY HAVE EFFECTIVELY USURPED THAT QUANTITY OF FISH WHICH PREVIOUSLY WENT TO SOUTH KOREA BY EXCLUDING THE SOUTH KOREANS FROM THEIR ZONE AND REFUSING EVEN TO DISCUSS WITH THEM OR OTHERS THE QUESTION OF "TRADI-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 06781 02 OF 03 170533Z

TIONAL FISHERIES".

4. THE NEW JAPANESE LEGISLATION MAKES IT VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT SOVIET FISHING IN JAPANESE WATERS WILL BE CURTAILED. THE ELEMENTS, THEREFORE, EXIST FOR SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE, BUT IT IS LIKELY TO INVOLVE SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED FISHING BY BOTH COUNTRIES IN EACH OTHER'S WATERS. THE QUESTION OF QUOTAS HAS APPARENTLY NOT YET BEEN SERIOUSLY DISCUSSED BUT IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE JAPANESE WILL BE BALE TO USE THE OCNTINUED SOVIET DESIRE TO FISH NEAR THE JAPANESE COAST TO BARGAIN FOR INCREASED ALLOTMENTS IN THE SOVIE ZONE. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT BOTH SIDES REFER TO THE US-JAPANESE GIFA AS AN EXAMPLE TO SUPPORT THEIR OWN POSITION ON THE FISHING ASPECTS OF THEIR BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS.

5. THE SOVIETS ARE MINDFUL OF THE TREMENDOUS PUBLIC SUPPORT WHICH THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT HAS ENJOYED ON THE FISHING ISSUE, BUT THEY ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE ISSUE IS LARGELY CONTRIEVED BY JAPANESE LEADERS WHO SEEK UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE, THAT THERE IS DISSIDENT WITHIN GOJ, THAT JAPANESE FISHERMEN WILL SOON PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT INTO ACCEPTING SOME COMPROMISE, AND THAT THE WHOLE MATTER WILL GRADUALLY BLOW OVER, AS HAVE OTHER RECENT ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THEY ARE RESENTFUL, HOWEVER, OF THE WAY THE ISSUE HAS BEEN HANDLED BY THE JAPANESE AND FEEL THAT THEY HAVE BEEN MISREPRESENTED AND MADE THE TARGET OF A NATIONALISTIC UPSURGE IN JAPAN. THEY ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE IS FUNDAMENTALLY AN ARTIFICIAL ISSUE ABOUT WHICH MOST JAPANESE CARE VERY LITTLE.

6. MOTIVES AND TACTICS: AS WITH ANY COMPLEX NEGOTIATION THERE IS A LARGE "SMOKESCREEN" ELEMENT IN BOTH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 06781 02 OF 03 170533Z

SIDES' POSITIONS. STILL, THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN UNNECESSARILY HARSH IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, TO THE POINT WHERE JAPAN QUESTIONS WHETHER ANY MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT IS POSSIBLE. IN OUR VIEW, THIS SOVIET APPROACH IS MOTIVATED BY SEVERAL INERRELATED FACTORS. FIRST, AS NOTED ABOVE, THEY BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE ON SOLID GROUND JURIDICALLY ON THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION, AND THAT IT IS UP TO THE JAPANESE TO GET THEMSELVES OFF OF THAT HOOK. THEY ARE ALSO APPARENTLY HESITANT TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO SPECIFIC QUOTAS FOR JAPAN UNTIL THEY KNOW WHAT THEIR OWN LIMITS WILL BE IN OTHER AREAS (EEC AND NORWAY, SPECIFICALLY). THEY NEED AN AGREEMENT LESS URGENTLY THAN THE JAPANESE DO AND THEY CAN PROBABLY GET ALONG WITH NO AGREEMENT AT ALL EVEN IF IT MEANS BEING EXCLUDED FROM JAPANESE WATERS. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WILL REFUSE TO PERMIT SOME JAPANESE FISHING, BUT THEY FEEL LITTLE PRESSURE TO COMPROMISE.

7. SECOND, THE SOVIETS PROBABLY BELIEVE THAT TAKING A TOUGH POSTURE WITH JAPAN BRINGS ABOUT DESIRED RESULTS. ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO THE SOVIETS LAUNCHED A MASSIVE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PROPOSED JAPAN-CHINA PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATY OVER THE SO-CALLED "HEGEMONY" CLAUSE. ALTHOUGH IT WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT SUCH A TREATY WOULD BE SIGNED ANYWAY, AND THAT THE SOVIET TACTICS WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF PUSHING JAPAN CLOSER TO CHINA, THE FACT IS THAT TWO YEARS LATER THE TREATY HAS NOT BEEN SIGNED AND THE VERY ISSUE WHICH THE SOVIETS RAISED HAS BEEN THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY HOPED THAT THEIR SIMILAR TACTIC AT THE TIME OF THE MIG-25 INCIDENT WOULD ALSO CAUSE THE JAPANESE TO LIMIT THE EXTENT OF THEIR COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. IN THIS CASE THE TACTICS DID NOT WORK, BUT THE SOVIETS MAY BELIEVE THAT THEY CAUSE SUFFICIENT DISCOMFORT IN TOKYO THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 06781 02 OF 03 170533Z

THE JAPANESE ARE NOW ON THE DEFENSIVE. IN ANY EVENT, THE SOVIETS, EMBITTERED BY THE MIG-25 CASE, ARE CONTENT TO SEE THE JAPANESE SQUIRM NOW AS THE SOVIETS DID LAST YEAR.

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 06781 03 OF 03 162015Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 MOSCOW 6781

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

8. THIRD, THE SOVIETS SEEM RESIGNED TO HAVING POOR POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH JAPAN. THEY ARE PERIODICALLY ANXIOUS ABOUT SIGNS OF GROWING CORDIALITY BETWEEN TOKYO AND PEKING BUT THEIR REACTION HAS BEEN TO CRITICIZE JAPAN FOR SUCH SIGNS RATHER THAN TO OFFER INDUCEMENTS TO DRAW JAPAN CLOSER TO MOSCOW.

9. IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES: POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE GENERALLY BEEN POOR THROUGHOUT THIS CENTURY. BOTH PEOPLES HAVE LONG COLLECTIVE MEMORIES AND REMEMBER THEIR WARS AND CONFLICTS. ADDED TO THESE PAINFUL MEMORIES, AND REINFORCEING THEM, ARE STRONG NEGATIVE STEROTYPES. THE JAPANESE GENERALLY CONSIDER THE RUSSIANS TO BE BOORISH AND TRUCULENT WHICH THE RUSSIANS CONSIDER THE JAPANESE SHIFTY AND OVERZEALOUS. WITH SUCH ATTITUDES THERE IS CONSTANT RISK OF STIMULATING NEGATIVE REACTIONS ON WHICHEVER ISSUE HAPPENS TO BE IN DISPUTE AT A GIVEN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 06781 03 OF 03 162015Z

MOMENT. MOREOVER, THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE A PROPENSITY ON EITHER SIDE TO RESOLVE THE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP OR TO RAISE IT MUCH BEYOND A LEVEL OF MUTUAL TOLERANCE.

10. THE FISHING ISSUE HAS BROUGHT SOVIET-JAPANESE RELATIONS TO THEIR LOWEST LEVEL IN MANY YEARS. ASSUMING THAT IT IS SOMEHOW RESOLVED, WE WOULD EXPECT RELATIONS TO WORK BACK TO A SLIGHTLY BETTER LEVEL. BUT THE BAD FEELING GENERATED BY THIS ISSUE, ADDED TO THAT FROM THE OTHER DIFFICULT EPISODES IN RECENT YEARS AND THE BASIC DISTRUST BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES, PROBABLY ENSURES THAT RELATIONS WILL REMAIN STRAINED FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. NEITHER SIDE IS GOING TO GIVE IN COMPLETELY ON THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE, AND UNTIL THAT QUESTION IS RESOLVED THERE IS NO REALISTIC PROSPECT FOR MUCH CLOSER POLITICAL RELATIONS.

11. HOWEVER, THERE ARE ALSO LIMITS ON HOW BAD RELATIONS WILL BECOME. FIRST, BOTH SIDES ARE MINDFUL THAT THERE ARE REAL DANGERS IN AGGRAVATING ANTAGONISMS. NEITHER SIDE'S INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY CUTTING OFF OR SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCING INTERCHANGE. THE SOVIETS IN PARTICULAR STAND TO BE HURT BY PUSHING JAPAN INTO A REAL OR QUASI-ALLIANCE WITH CHINA. INDEED, SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD FULFILL ONE OF THE SOVIET NIGHTMARES ABOUT THE UNION OF CHINA'S MASSES WITH JAPAN'S INDUSTRIAL MIGHT, IN OPPOSITION TO THE USSR. THE SOVIETS THUS HAVE GOOD REASON FOR SEEKING TO LIMIT THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE FISHING ISSUE.

12. THE OTHER LIMITING FACTOR IS THE BOOMING ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. BOTH SIDES HAVE SOUGHT TO INSULATE ECONOMIC TIES FROM POLITICAL INFLUENCES, AND IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THIS PATTERN WILL CONTINUE. ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS WOULD LIKE MUCH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 06781 03 OF 03 162015Z

LARGER JAPANESE INVESTMENT IN SIBERIAN DEVELOPMENT, AND ARE PERIODICALLY IRKED AT JAPANESE CAUTION, THEY NEVERTHELESS VALUE THE TRADE AND INVESTMENT WHICH HAS OCCURRED AND POINT TO IT WITH PRIDE AS AN EXAMPLE OF MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN COUNTRIES OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL SYSTEMS.

13. THE FISHING TALKS ARE CONTINUING AND, DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH PRESSURE THE JAPANESE FEEL, MAY PRODUCE AN AGREEMENT WITHIN A FEW WEEKS. THE AGREEMENT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE UNSATISFACTORY FROM THE JAPANESE SIDE BUT IT WILL BE PRESENTED ON BOTH SIDES AS A SUCCESS AND IT WILL PERMIT THE RESUMPTION OF SOME JAPANESE FISHING, ALBEIT ON A MORE LIMITED SCALE, IN THE SOVIET FISHING ZONE. THE BITTER AFTER-TASTE, HOWEVER, (WHICH WE SUPPOSE COULD ALSO GENERATE

JAPANESE DOMESTIC CRITICISM OF THE FUKUDA GOVERNMENT)
WILL ENSURE THAT RELATIONS DO NOT IMPROVE MUCH AS A RESULT
OF THE AGREEMENT. MEANWHILE THE SOVIETS WILL WATCH
KEENLY TO NOTE ANY SIGNS OF FURTHER WARMTH BETWEEN
TOKYO AND PEKING.

14. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY
TOKYO THAT THE US INTEREST IN MAINTAINING CLOSE
RELATIONS WITH ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT ALLIES WOULD
CLEARLY BE SERVED BY EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY AND
UNDERSTANDING FOR THE JAPANESE IN THEIR CURRENT DIFFI-
CULTIES WITH THE SOVIETS. BUT WE WOULD CAUTION AGAINST
TAKING A POSITION WHICH COULD BE MISINTERPRETED AS
DISCOURAGING A SOLUTION. OUR JURIDICAL POSITION
SUPPORTING JAPAN'S CLAIMS TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES,
IS CLEAR, BUT WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN HOW THE JAPANESE
MAY CHOOSE TO HANDLE THIS AND OTHER SPECIFIC ISSUES
AS THEY SEEK AN AGREEMENT WHICH MEETS THEIR MINIMUM
REQUIREMENTS. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE SOVIETS
WILL MODIFY THEIR APPROACH SOMEWHAT, HAVING MADE
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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 06781 03 OF 03 162015Z

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Message Attributes

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